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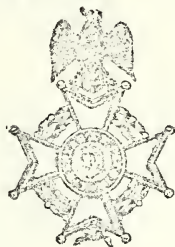


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Settlement of Steuben County

New York



A SKETCH OF EARLY TIMES

BY

URI MULFORD

CORNING, N. Y.



Corning Journal Print

1909

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Steuben County
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ENCLOSURE

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OFFICERS OF PAINTED POST CHAPTER,
SONS AMERICAN REVOLUTION,

1909.

President, Arthur Amory Houghton.

Vice-President, Delmar Matthews Darrin.

Secretary, John Laurens Chatfield.

Treasurer, Willard S. Reed.

Historian, Uri Mulford.

Chaplain, Rev. John Chester Ball.

Delegate to National Congress, Alanson Bigelow
Houghton.

Alternate Delegate, Frederick J. Townsend.

The Painted Post Chapter of the Empire State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, was organized in the city of Corning, N. Y., December 28, 1908, and was incorporated under the Laws of the State of New York on February 10, 1909.

BANQUET TENDERED

THE PAINTED POST CHAPTER, S. A. R.

The first social gathering of The Painted Post Chapter, of the Empire State Society, of the Sons of the American Revolution, was held at Corning Club on the evening of June 24, 1909. A course dinner was served. Arthur A. Houghton, President of the Chapter, was the host.

At the close of the banquet a paper on "The Settlement of Steuben County" was presented by Uri Mulford, Historian of the Chapter. By a unanimous vote of the Chapter, this paper was ordered printed in pamphlet form for distribution among the members of the Chapter and for placement in its historical archives.

Those present were: Compatriots Dr. Byron Pierce, of Coopers Plains; Delmar M. Darrin, of Addison; Henry Martin McCullough, of Lawrenceville, Pa.; Hon. Frank C. Platt, Fred J. Townsend, Arthur Erwin Iredell and John Laurens Chatfield, of Painted Post; Arthur A. Houghton, Rev. John Chester Ball, Harry A. Erwin, William J. Heermans, Harry Hayt Pratt, Alanson Bigelow Houghton, Frederick H. Fuller, Uri Mulford, Julian C. Drake, Herbert A. Heminway and Willard S. Reed, of Corning. George Hollister, of Corning, was an honored guest.

Regrets were received from Compatriots Clarence Ellsworth Townsend, of Auburn; J. Towner Hayt and Lorenzo D. Oviatt, of Corning; Hon. George R. Sutherland, of New York City; Willis L. Hamilton, of Campbell; Rear Admiral E. S. Prime, U. S. N., of Huntington, N. Y., Historian of the Huntington Chapter, S. A. R.

John L. Chatfield

Secretary.

The Settlement of Steuben County

A historical sketch prepared for and presented at a Banquet of members of "The Painted Post Chapter," of the Empire State Society, of the Sons of the American Revolution, at the Corning Club, in the City of Corning, N. Y., June 24th, 1909, by URI MULFORD, Historian of the Chapter.

The speaker was requested by the President of this Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution to prepare and present a paper on the Settlement of Steuben County, New York. In complying with the request of our Commander in Chief, I am mindful of the danger of burying the members of the Painted Post Chapter beyond recovery underneath an avalanche composed of parts of speech and stale numericals.

Geographically speaking, Steuben is not a large County; but, in its historical connections, it is part and parcel of a past whose range expands beyond measure; and it interlocks with a moving present that embraces the best things in the life of our Republic—a connection that fills the hearts of all true sons and step-sons of Old Steuben with confidence as regards the future.

During the settlement period of Western New York, beginning about 1788, the Chemung Valley was the principal

gateway between the Colonies and the Genesee Country. Then the Genesee Country was a land without meets or bounds, lying in the midst of a vast forest sea. Prior to the purchase of the Massachusetts pre-emption right, or fee of the land, in Western New York, by Phelps & Gorham, and its survey for settlement, the location of the Genesee Country was not clear in the public mind. It had no definite place on the crude maps of that day. Under an early Crown grant, the Colony of Massachusetts held title to a strip of territory as broad as itself, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. By a compromise with this State, following the Revolution, Massachusetts was given pre-emption title to the strip of land described in the purchase of Phelps & Gorham. To them Massachusetts in turn gave title. It was:

"All that part of the State of New York lying west of a line, beginning at a point in the north line of Pennsylvania, 82 miles north of the northeast corner of said State, and running from thence due north through Seneca Lake to Lake Ontario; excepting and reserving to the State of New York a strip of land east of, and adjoining the eastern bank of the Niagara river, one mile wide and extending its whole length."

This land was sold in 1788 to Phelps & Gorham by the State of Massachusetts, subject to the title of natives. About six million acres of land were thus conveyed. But the name Genesee Country first embraced, indefinitely, the region of

country within the bounds of the State of New York affected by the Sullivan Expedition, in 1779, when he overcame, demoralized and scattered the Seneca Indians and the remnants of a few confederate tribes.

Beginning at the Genesee river, at the time of the Wyoming massacre, thence westward to the Niagara frontier and Lake Erie, was a wilderness abounding with game. This extensive region constituted the hunting ground of the Senecas, and was by them most carefully guarded against poachers. Within its limits were no Indian villages. But along the Genesee, and thence eastward throughout central and southern New York, about the shores of the various lakes and along the bottom lands of numerous rivers and brooks, to the vicinity of the encroaching white settlements that marked the western boundary of advancing civilization, were Indian villages surrounded by or near to well cared for and exceedingly productive plantations. The Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, Mohawks and Tuscaroras were farmers as well as hunters. And it was the permanent homes of the Senecas and Cayugas that General Sullivan burned, and their growing crops that he destroyed, even to cutting down their apple and peach orchards.

From Chesapeake Bay up the Susquehanna and the Chumung rivers to the Painted Post was a natural passage way by water into the Genesee Country. It was the way traveled in and out by all the tribes of the Six Nations in going to

and from the Southern seaboard. In fact, there was no other "all water" way in and out of the Genesee Country. Tioga Point was from ancient days a place of Indian rendezvous from whence tribesmen embarked in canoes on foraging expeditions to the far South, sometimes finding rich spoils of war in Florida and about the Gulf of Mexico. It was from Tioga Point the hostile Indians and their Tory associates moved, upon Wyoming and from there, also, they advanced upon Cherry Valley.

The lower Susquehanna River was discovered in 1608 by Captain John Smith, of Virginia, but he did not explore it.

The first white men to reach Tioga Point were three venturesome Dutch traders who came across the wilds from Albany, in 1614, and were made captives and held by the savages for about a year, and then allowed to go down the Susquehanna River in a canoe.

General Sullivan with an invading army of 4,000 men, took Newtown the 29th of August, 1779, scattering about 1,500 Indian warriors and some 200 British soldiers. Shortly before the battle of Newtown began, the Indian braves sent their old men, squaws and children up the Chemung river to the Painted Post, there to await events; and when disaster came to the Indian fighters, Indian runners were sent on to warn the non-combatants to flee via the Conhocton and the Genesee rivers to the Niagara, while the defeated braves led Sullivan's forces a wild chase via Catherine's Town,

around Seneca Lake to Geneva, Canandaigua and thence to the heart of the Genesee bottom lands. A detachment of the Sullivan Continentals sent from Newtown up the Chemung River, had a lively skirmish with Red Skins at Bloody Run, just east of Gibson, town of Corning, and overpowered the enemy. These Continentals destroyed wigwams and crops at Painted Post and Little Flats. Sullivan's men destroyed in all 40 Indian villages, some of which were composed of substantial log houses built in imitation of the homes of the frontier white settlers. That expedition took the heart out of the Indian owners of the Genesee Country, and never again did these Indians attempt united resistance to the whites. But there followed for a number of years occasional cases of killing of whites by Indians, and of killing of Indians by whites.

Consider the Senecas! They were the leading tribe of the Six Nations. For ages the Senecas had defended the Confederation against aggressions by strong bands of Red Men dwelling to the north and in the west.

At the time William the Conqueror conquered the savages of the British Islands, the Indian tribes of New York State were warring upon each other when not being warred upon by tribes from elsewhere. To defend themselves against predatory attacks the Senecas and other Iroquois tribes established well built places of refuge. Having no iron tools to work with, the Indians first burned down trees, burned them into sections, then took these sections and stood

them on end side by side in trenches dug for the purpose, filled in the earth, and thus erected palisades that enclosed, in some instances, several acres of land. Inside these stoutly constructed fortresses, with a single opening arranged to be closed in case of need, wigwams were erected and large stores of corn, dried berries and fruits, and dried meats were buried.

The first settlers of the Genesee Country found the remains of such Indian forts near Canisteo, near Elmira, near Waverly, and near Geneva, and elsewhere in Central and Western New York. But not one of these forts had seen service for six or seven centuries, according to the story of the trees found growing amid their ruins. This fact indicates that, some seven or eight hundred years ago, the American savages discovered that peace by mutual agreement produced more satisfactory results than everlasting strivings. It demonstrates how the various Indian tribes, then occupying the soil of two-thirds of the State of New York, joined hand in hand for the common defense and mutual help. The Five Nations thus united were invincible. They prospered. As the years rolled by, for want of practice, they forgot the art of collective warfare. They became as children.

When the French got a foot-hold in Canada they began to press the Iroquois. Incursion after incursion of marauding French adventurers, accompanied by scalp-hunting In-

dian allies, wrought havoc in the land of the Iroquois. These acts of aggression cost the French the friendship of the Five Nations—later augmented by the admission of a sixth tribe, the Tuscaroras—and lost to the French the American Continent.

Next into the land of the Iroquois came the English, with William Johnson, a crafty Irishman, as Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Crown. Johnson came over in 1737 or 1738. He made his headquarters on the Mohawk, in the northern section of the State of New York.

Johnson furnished each Indian that applied a complete hunting outfit, including gun, tomahawk and scalping knife, and filled him to the chin with strong rum, all free of charge, on condition that the subject of his Christian charity should forthwith go "scalp hunting" among the French and the Indians under French influence.

The resourceful Johnson also encouraged the propagation of what he, at least, deemed an improved order of Red Men. He entered so zealously upon the work of producing Indian half-breeds, that when he was called hence, in June, 1774, an inventory revealed something like two hundred semi-savage Johnsons, from simple fractions to decimals. Too much Johnson and the consequent feeling of kinship-friendliness that extended from Johnson Hall throughout all the land of the Iroquois, with the bare exception of the Oneidas, caused troublesome complications between the

Americans and the Red Men of the State of New York. The head of the herd of Johnson, the Johnson sons—pure blood and mongrel—and the Johnson squaws, all sided with the English, whence William Johnson got his "Sir," and also extensive grants of the choicest of New York State lands.

During the middle period of the eighteenth century the Iroquois were crowded from all sides of their vast possessions. They knew the story of Lake Champlain and of the slaughter of the Pequots in Connecticut by Mason. They understood how the presence of white settlers destroyed hunting grounds. Consequently they became greatly alarmed when the settlement of Wyoming, on the lower Susquehanna, began. They held a council and protested against such settlement, as a violation of treaty rights. William Johnson also entered protest in behalf of the Indians. Encouraged by the Johnsons most of the Six Nations, during the Revolution, took sides with the Red Coats, hoping thereby to save their hunting grounds and to reopen the gateway to the south.

The Wyoming territory was claimed by Connecticut under a Crown grant that extended from "sea to sea," just as Massachusetts claimed Western New York State. Connecticut people began to flock to the settlement of Wyoming in 1762. Pennsylvania land speculators attempted to dispossess the Connecticut settlers, attacking their title under the Crown grant. The Pennsylvania Company induced settlers from their State to move into the Wyoming Country. As a result of these counter claims arose contentions which

for a dozen years prior to the beginning of the Revolution led to battles between rival white occupants of the soil, blood being shed, buildings and crops burned, people driven from their homes, and great bitterness of feeling engendered. At the outbreak of the Revolution, Wyoming became quiet. Most of the heads of families were Revolutionary soldiers. Finally the Senecas seem to have come to believe that by wiping out the white settlements of Wyoming, while many heads of families were absent, they could repossess the land for themselves and restore ancient conditions. Thus was brought about the massacre of Wyoming, in August, 1778. Like conditions caused in this same year the massacre of Cherry Valley, in this State. The year following, General George Washington sent General John Sullivan with a force of 4,000 men, to punish the Senecas and lay waste their homes and destroy their growing crops.

The Sullivan Expedition resulted in the permanent occupancy of the Genesee Country by white settlers, as soon after the close of the Revolution as it was possible for them to flock here from the various States represented by the men of his expedition.

In 1787 the first settlers brought the frontier line up the Susquehanna to Tioga Point. There the following year Lieut.-Col. Eleazer Lindsley, a prospector from New Jersey, arrived for the purpose of locating, to find all the available land taken up. He at once pushed on via Catherine's

Town to the fine lands along Seneca Lake, south-east of Geneva, at a point called Apple Town, and laid out several township strips. But on account of trouble between the State and a company of land speculators who had in 1787 without warrant induced the Indians to make a "999" year lease of the soil east of Seneca Lake, Lieut.-Col. Lindsley retraced his steps to Newtown and came thence on horseback along a well-worn Indian trail to the Painted Post. In June, 1790, this land seeker, with his own family and five other families, established a settlement in the town of Lindley, which then became the Western outpost of civilization in Southern New York.

A brief review of the events that led to the surrender to the whites of the Indian title to the soil in this County is in place. In 1787 Phelps & Gorham purchased of the State of Massachusetts its pre-emption right to all Western New York. The following Spring, Oliver Phelps left his home in Granville, Massachusetts, with men and teams, and after considerable road making reached Canandaigua, N. Y., in May. There in Rev. Samuel Kirkland, a well established missionary among the Indians, he found a willing helper in his efforts to secure a surrender to Phelps & Gorham by the savages of their right to the soil. An attempt was made by Phelps with the aid of Kirkland to get the Indians together for a treaty at Canandaigua, but it failed. The next month Phelps met a number of chiefs of the Six

Nations at Buffalo Creek, and there preliminary arrangements for a treaty were made. Under Indian usage the soil could not be disposed of without the consent of all the tribes affected, including squaws as well as warriors and chiefs. So a general treaty was called and held at Canandaigua. It began the latter part of July and continued well into August, 1789, lasting for twenty days in all. Over 2,000 male and female Indians attended, and after powwowing and feasting until the last of the fat cattle supplied by Oliver Phelps had been devoured, the Senecas concluded an agreement that forever relinquished to Phelps & Gorham their right to over 2,000,000 acres of land, embracing a strip from Lake Ontario to the Pennsylvania line, west of Seneca Lake, known as the "Genesee Tract."

Phelps & Gorham at once set surveyors at work, dividing it into townships six miles square and for convenience mapping the same into ranges; the towns numbering from east to west and the ranges from south to north. Thus Caton, the south-east or corner town of the purchase, was Town No. 1, Range 1, and was commonly known in early days as "Number One."

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Following the treaty at Canandaigua of July-August, 1789, settlers began to come into the Genesee Country, as well as into all Central New York. Three-fourths of these pioneers were Revolutionary soldiers; most of them had first come this way with General Sullivan.

The first white habitation to be erected in Steuben County was probably the home and trading hut built at Painted Post in 1784, by William Harris, an Indian trader.

In December, 1790, there were three settlements in Steuben County—Lindley, with six families and 34 persons, including seven negro slaves; Erwin, five families, 25 persons; Corning, ten families, 59 persons—all three places lying within the township of Painted Post. The population of all Ontario County, of which at that time Steuben was a part, was 960.

Not all the Seneca Indians were satisfied with the bargain they had made with Oliver Phelps. To patch matters up, a treaty was held the following year, in 1790, at Tioga Point, which was attended by a large number of Indians. Again the Indians got restless, and killed a few whites; and whites killed a few Indians. President Washington, then in the first year of office, met Cornplanter and some other discontented chiefs in Philadelphia, and reached an understanding that made for peace. This conference was followed by a general treaty, held at Newtown on the Chemung, in June, 1791, which was largely attended. This treaty was noted for its displays of Indian oratory, on the part of Red Jacket, who was ably met by Col. Pickering, of Wyoming, then United States Secretary of War. It was attended by the chiefs of the Cayugas, Onondagas and Senecas, and secured the settlers of Central and Western New York from molestation by Indians.

In 1791, Ontario was granted representation in the New

York Assembly and Eleazer Lindsley, of Lindley, was the first man elected to represent the County in the State Legislature. Steuben County was taken from Ontario in 1796. It was named for Maj.-Gen. Frederic William Augustus, Baron de Steuben, Tactician of the Revolutionary Army.

The settlement of Bath began 1793 Bath was colonized by settlers brought overland from lower Pennsylvania by Charles Williamson, agent of an English Association which had purchased from Robert Morris the former holdings of Phelps & Gorham, some 1,200,000 acres afterwards known as the Pulteney Estate. Williamson was not a success as a colonizer, considering the money he spent.

To be told that there were slave holders in Steuben County in its pioneer days may surprise some of the sons of the strenuous Abolitionists of the Civil War period. Slavery in its beginning in this country was as much of a Northern as a Southern institution, and strictly according to the Scriptures. The first white settlers in this land bunched together at Jamestown, Salem, Lynn, Boston, Saybrook, Easthampton, Manhattan, etc., along the seaboard, for mutual help and protection. They took advantage of the most convenient natural conditions, crowding gradually back from the sea, up the rivers and around inland lakes, gleaning their livelihood from forest, land and water. There were few men that cared to work for the going wages of the times, when nature's bountiful offerings were theirs for the taking. Some of the settlers induced Indians to work, but

Red Men did not take to the class of labor desired by our fathers—it was squaw work—and, besides, they had other heads to scalp. So black men and women and children were brought from across the seas into the Colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, etc., to help the founders of this Republic plant the Tree of Liberty.

The Pilgrims who went from England to the Netherlands and then came to America under English auspices; the Puritans of England, dissenters of dissenters; the Holland Dutch, and all the rest of the early Europeans having a part in planting the Thirteen Colonies, were in more senses than one kith and kin. Three hundred years ago the common everyday Briton and the plain Hollander were so near alike one could not distinguish between them in worship or battle. They spoke the same language, with slight variance in pronunciation. They were just "Folks." Every New England settlement in its beginning was a church organization. The man who could not pass inspection in the church could not vote nor hold office. The thing that could not be proved by the Holy Scriptures, or that was not allowed by the settlement pastor, must not be done. And so the "Blue Laws" originated. They fitted the period. We need not be ashamed of the "Blue Laws" nor of the men who enacted them.

The historian Macaulay, commenting on the tendency to sneer at the Puritans, says: "No man ever did it who had

occasion to meet them in the halls of debate, or cross swords with them on the field of battle." Bancroft says of them: "The Knights of old were brave from gallantry of spirit; the Puritans from fear of God. The Knights were proud of loyalty; the Puritans of liberty. The former adorned society by graceful refinements; the latter founded grandeur on universal education."

The Pilgrims and the Puritans brought their convictions across the sea with them; they stood by the stuff no matter whence the attack came; they created the "Stars and Stripes," and endowed the flag with the kind of a living soul possessed by no other national emblem. And of such were the pioneer settlers of Steuben County. We have reason to feel proud of our ancestry and thankful for our inheritance.

To the restless plottings of mongrel Indians most of the troubles of the settlers were due. Such Indians had none of the virtues but all of the faults of their white fathers. The real Indians were a simple folk. They lived as near the level of a wild animal as was possible. They lacked initiative. They were not inventive. In all the annals of Indian activities in this section, we find that the Indians did just one praiseworthy thing—they planted a stake beside a river hard by, and daubed it with a stain, and so furnished our Chapter with a name. That "painted post" was a marker, we are told—but when we ask what it was meant to mark, no one can tell.

The black bears of Potter County, Pennsylvania, imitating the example of their ancestors, are wont to gnaw and claw the bark from the side of a growing tree, as they pass from place to place in the forests, to indicate to other black bears that they have been there and will return again. So Indian wisdom and bear instinct seem to be off the same piece.

Writing at Morristown, N. J., in the Spring of 1778, one of the first men to come into this section to settle, said: "I am about to start out for the Genesee Country; I shall go to the Painted Post."

In a broad sense, "the painted post" of the Senecas, marked the territory. It was a guide post understood by the Indians. It gave location to a place in a wide expanse of wilderness country.

But the name of "The Painted Post Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution," stands for something other than geographical location. As sons of men who brought the Revolution about and fought it to a finish, we will immortalize the old painted stick.

In the hands of our zealous Secretary it will bud, bring forth branches, and roots, and in due time become a veritable Tree of Liberty.

We will nourish the Tree, not for ourselves alone, but also for those with whom we associate in the walks of life—and more, preserve it as an inheritance for those who will occupy when we have run our course.



